image
12
DEC
$1.95
$2.65
CANADA
THE MASK
TM
HEY KID!
WHAT THE #$%*! ARE YOU LOOKIN' AT?

image™ COMICS PRESENTS:

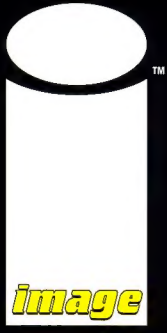
story & art
SAM KIETH
swell dialogue
BILL MESSNER-LOEBS
lettering
MIKE HEISLER
finishes
JIM SINCLAIR
color
STEVE OLIFF
and OLYOPTICS
logo
CHANCE WOLF
film output
KELL-O-GRAPHICS

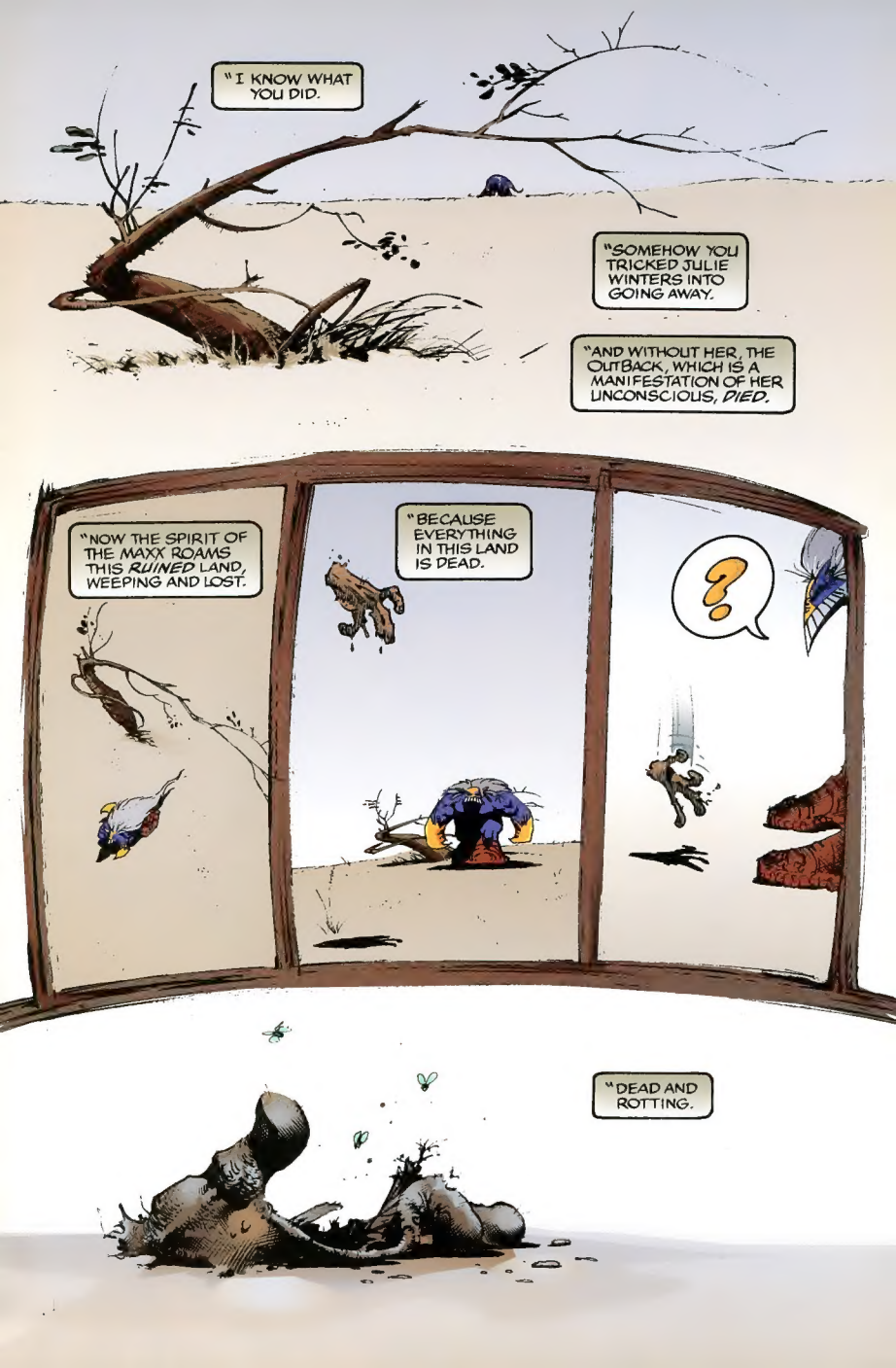
OLYOPTICS:
Tracey Anderson, Robyn Roberson, Cathy Enis, Patti Stratton Jordan, Kirk Mobert, Quinn Suplee, William Zindel, Lea Rude, Stacy Cox, Marie St. Clair, Chris Wolfe, and Moolis.

FOR IMAGE COMICS

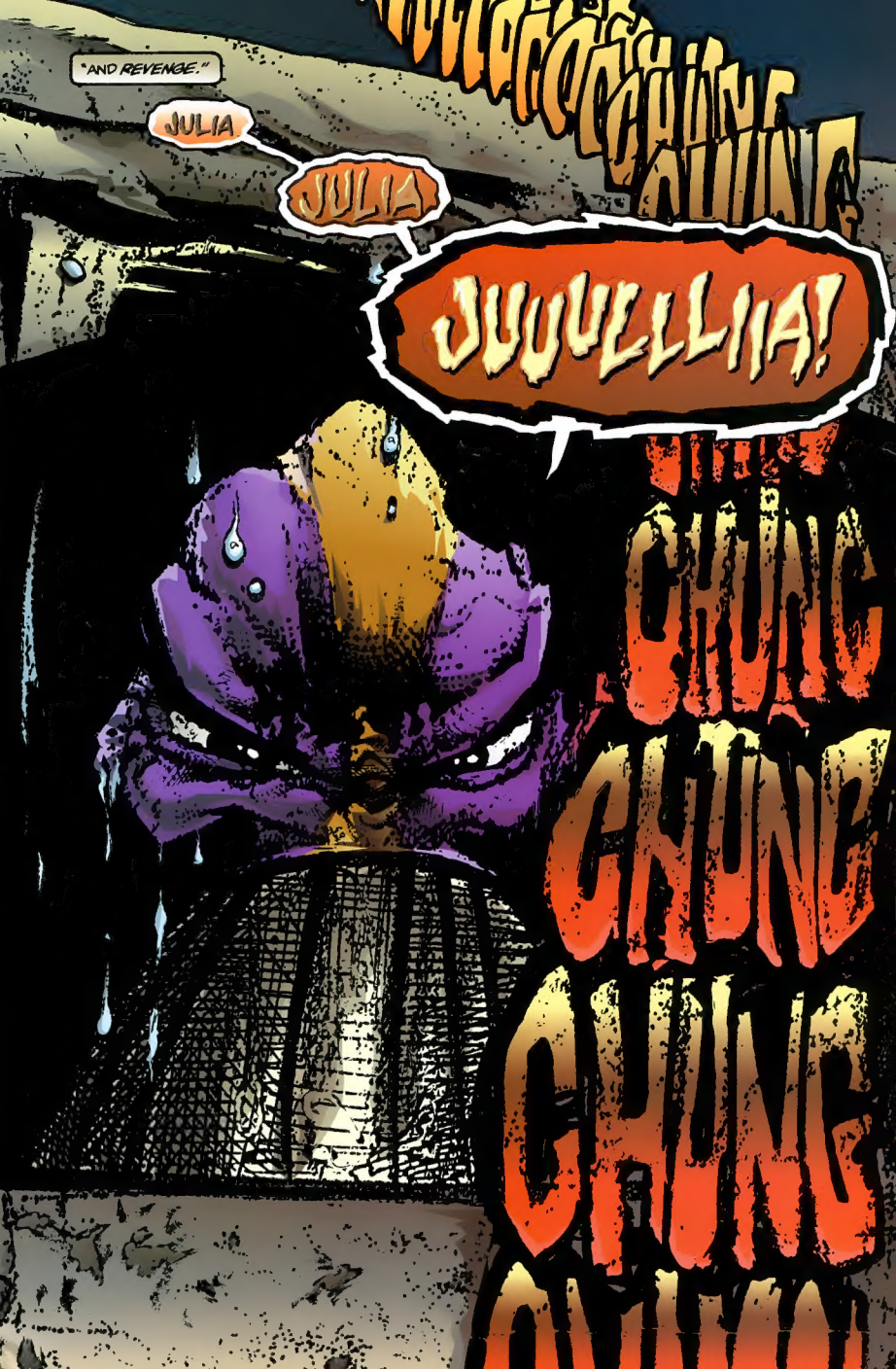
Executive Director: LARRY MARDER
Publisher: TONY LOBITO
Art Director: DOUG GRIFFITH
Production Manager: TERESA CESPEDES
Distribution: GERMAINE ZACHARIAH
Traffic: RONNA COULTER
Graphic Design: KENNY FELIX
Asst. to Exec. Director: KELLY VAN LANDINGHAM

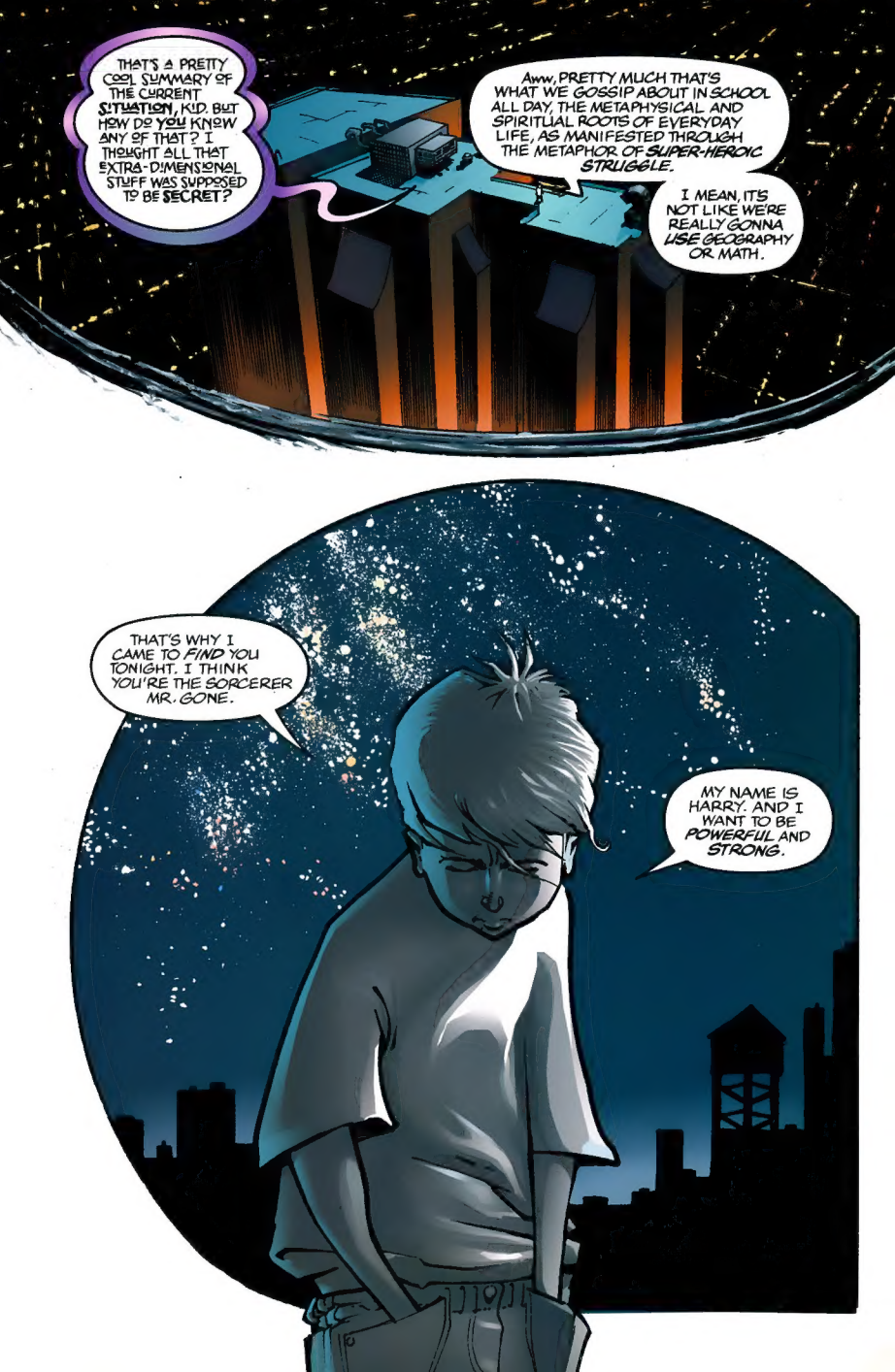
MAXX #12. **Dec. 1994.** FIRST PRINTING. Published by IMAGE COMICS. P.O. Box 25468 Anaheim CA 92825. Entire contents ™ and © 1993 Sam Kieth, all rights reserved. Qusak! Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Sam Kieth. Send correspondence to: Sam Kieth, 4363 Hazel Avenue, Suite 1-285, Fair Oaks, California, 95628. Publishers and creator assume no responsibility for unsolicited materials PRINTED IN CANADA.

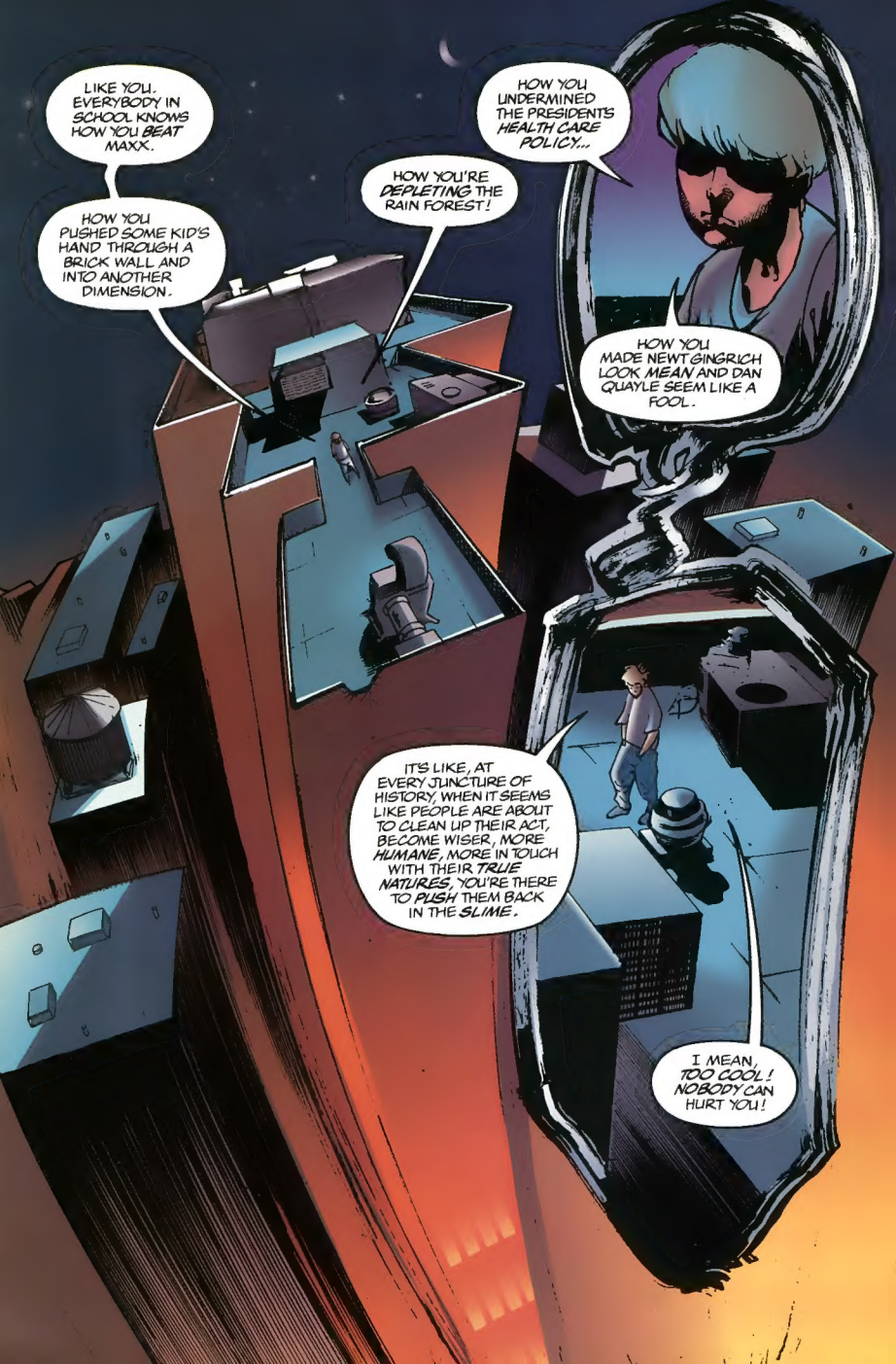


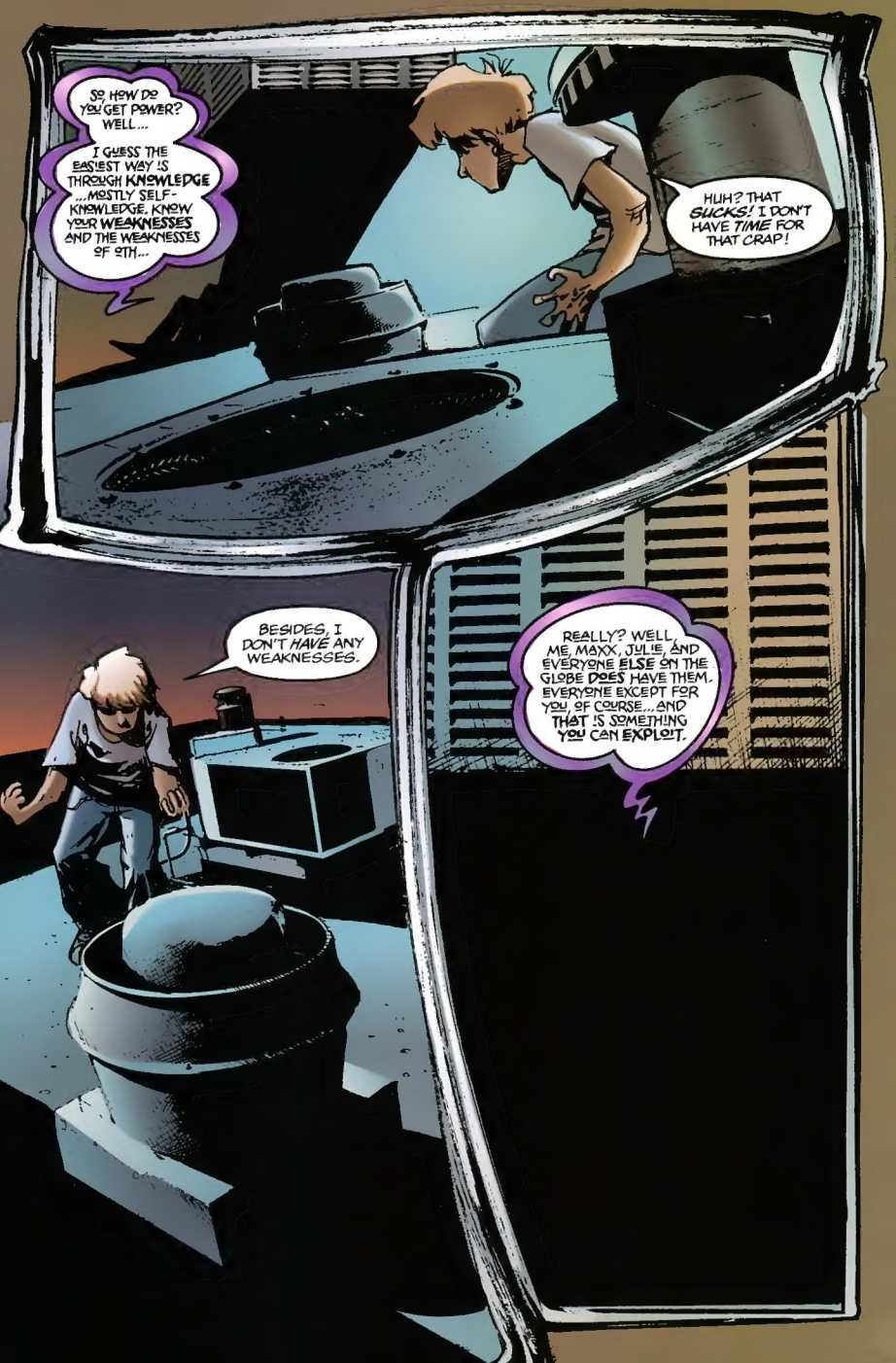

"I KNOW WHAT YOU DID.
"SOMEHOW YOU TRICKED JULIE WINTERS INTO GOING AWAY.
"AND WITHOUT HER, THE OUTBACK, WHICH IS A MANIFESTATION OF HER UNCONSCIOUS, DIED.
"NOW THE SPIRIT OF THE MAXX ROAMS THIS RUINED LAND, WEEPING AND LOST.
"BECAUSE EVERYTHING IN THIS LAND IS DEAD.
?
"DEAD AND ROTTING.

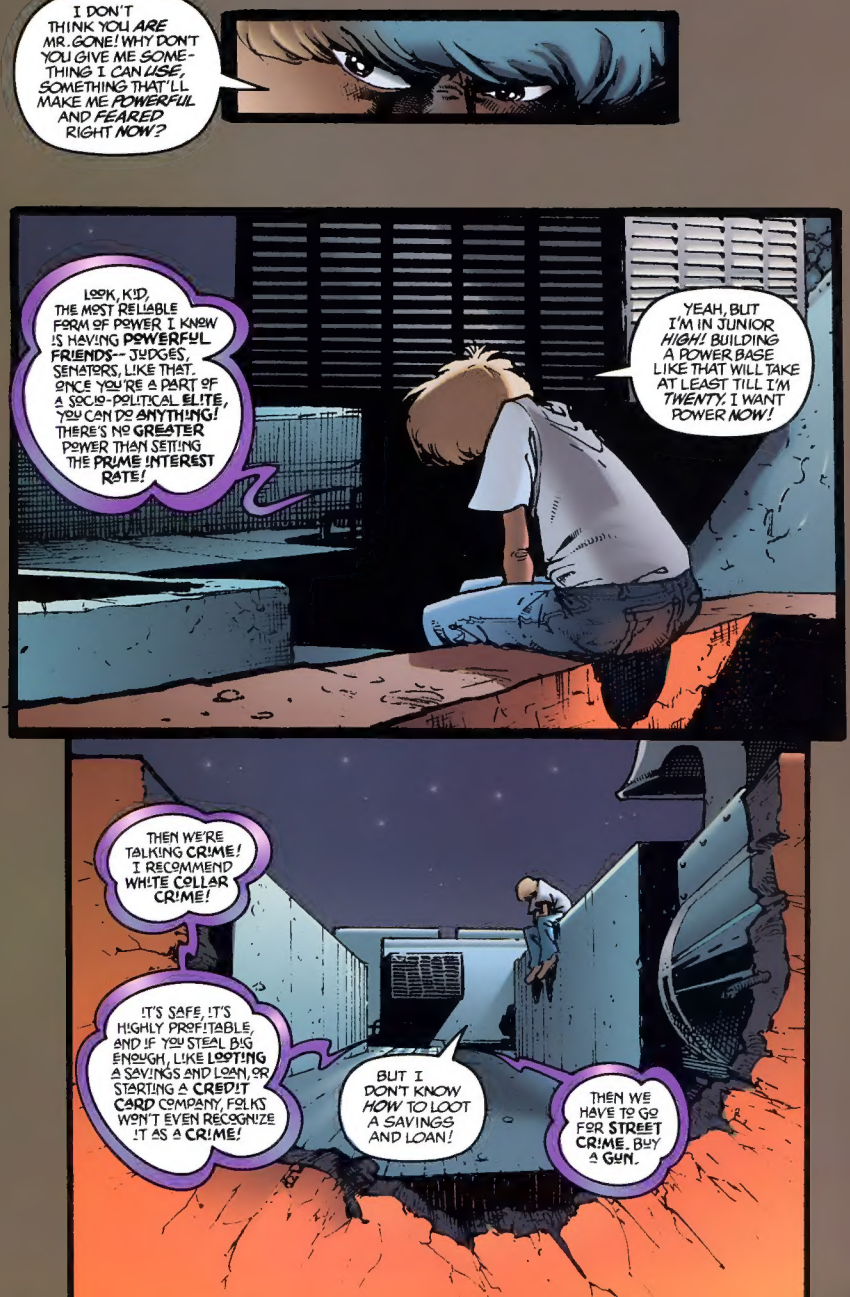
"AND ON THIS PLANE, THE MAXX IS INCAPACITATED WITH LONELINESS AND GRIEF.
"HE'S CRAWLED INTO A HOLE TO MEDITATE ON HIS IMPOTENCE...
"AND SELF-PITY.
"CAUGHT UP IN FORCES HE CAN'T UNDERSTAND...
"HE BROODS ON ANGER...
"RAGE...
TAC
TAC
TAC
TAC
TAC
TAC
TAC
CHUNG
CHUNG
CHUNG
CHUNG
CHUNG
CHUNG
CHUNG
TAC

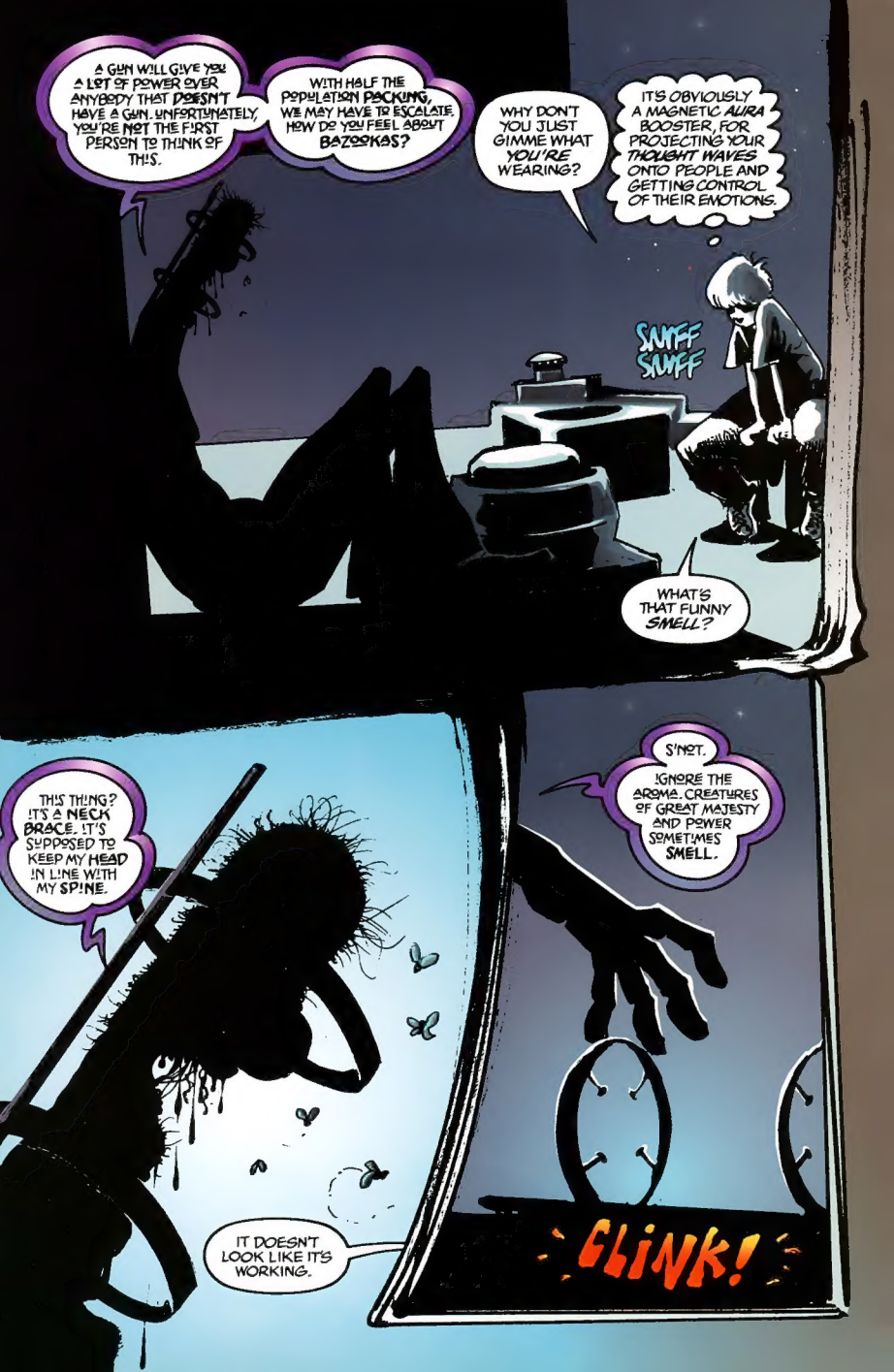

"AND REVENGE."
JULIA
JULIA
JUUUELLIIA!
CHUNG
CHUNG
CHUNG

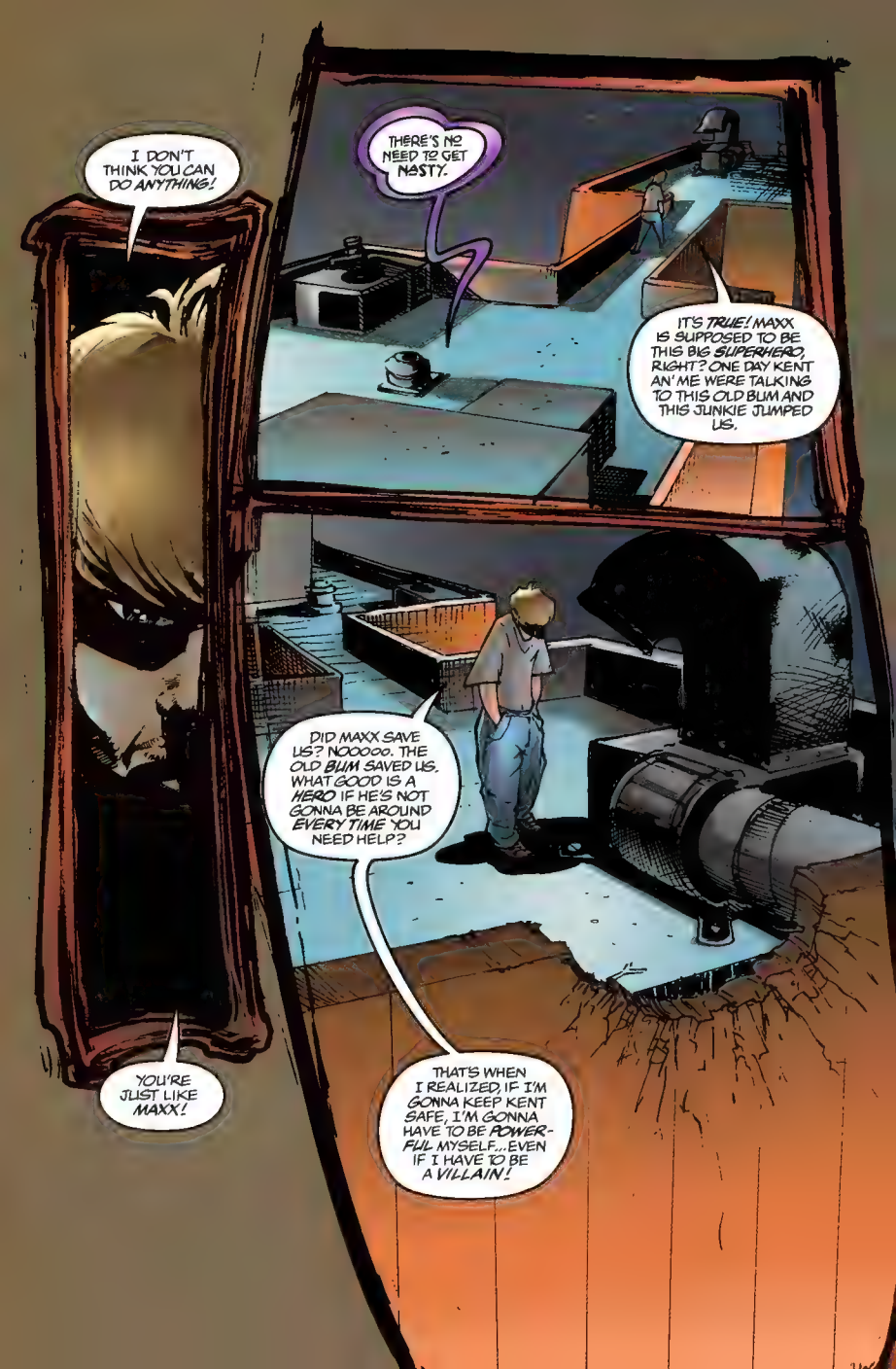

THAT'S A PRETTY COOL SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, KID. BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW ANY OF THAT? I THOUGHT ALL THAT EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL STUFF WAS SUPPOSED TO BE SECRET?
Aww, PRETTY MUCH THAT'S WHAT WE GOSSIP ABOUT IN SCHOOL ALL DAY, THE METAPHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE, AS MANIFESTED THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF SUPER-HEROIC STRUGGLE.
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE REALLY GONNA USE GEOGRAPHY OR MATH.
THAT'S WHY I CAME TO FIND YOU TONIGHT. I THINK YOU'RE THE SORCERER MR. GONE.
MY NAME IS HARRY. AND I WANT TO BE POWERFUL AND STRONG.


LIKE YOU. EVERYBODY IN SCHOOL KNOWS HOW YOU BEAT MAXX.
HOW YOU PUSHED SOME KID'S HAND THROUGH A BRICK WALL AND INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION.
HOW YOU'RE DEPLETING THE RAIN FOREST!
HOW YOU UNDERMINED THE PRESIDENTS HEALTH CARE POLICY...
HOW YOU MADE NEWT GINGRICH LOOK MEAN AND DAN QUAYLE SEEM LIKE A FOOL.
IT'S LIKE, AT EVERY JUNCTURE OF HISTORY, WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE PEOPLE ARE ABOUT TO CLEAN UP THEIR ACT, BECOME WISER, MORE HUMANE, MORE IN TOUCH WITH THEIR TRUE NATURES, YOU'RE THERE TO PUSH THEM BACK IN THE SLIME.
I MEAN, TOO COOL! NOBODY CAN HURT YOU!


SO, HOW DO YOU GET POWER? WELL...
I GUESS THE EASIEST WAY IS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE ...MOSTLY SELF-KNOWLEDGE. KNOW YOUR WEAKNESSES AND THE WEAKNESSES OF OTH...
HUH? THAT SUCKS! I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT CRAP!
BESIDES, I DON'T HAVE ANY WEAKNESSES.
REALLY? WELL, ME, MAXX, JULIE, AND EVERYONE ELSE ON THE GLOBE DOES HAVE THEM. EVERYONE EXCEPT FOR YOU, OF COURSE... AND THAT IS SOMETHING YOU CAN EXPLOIT.

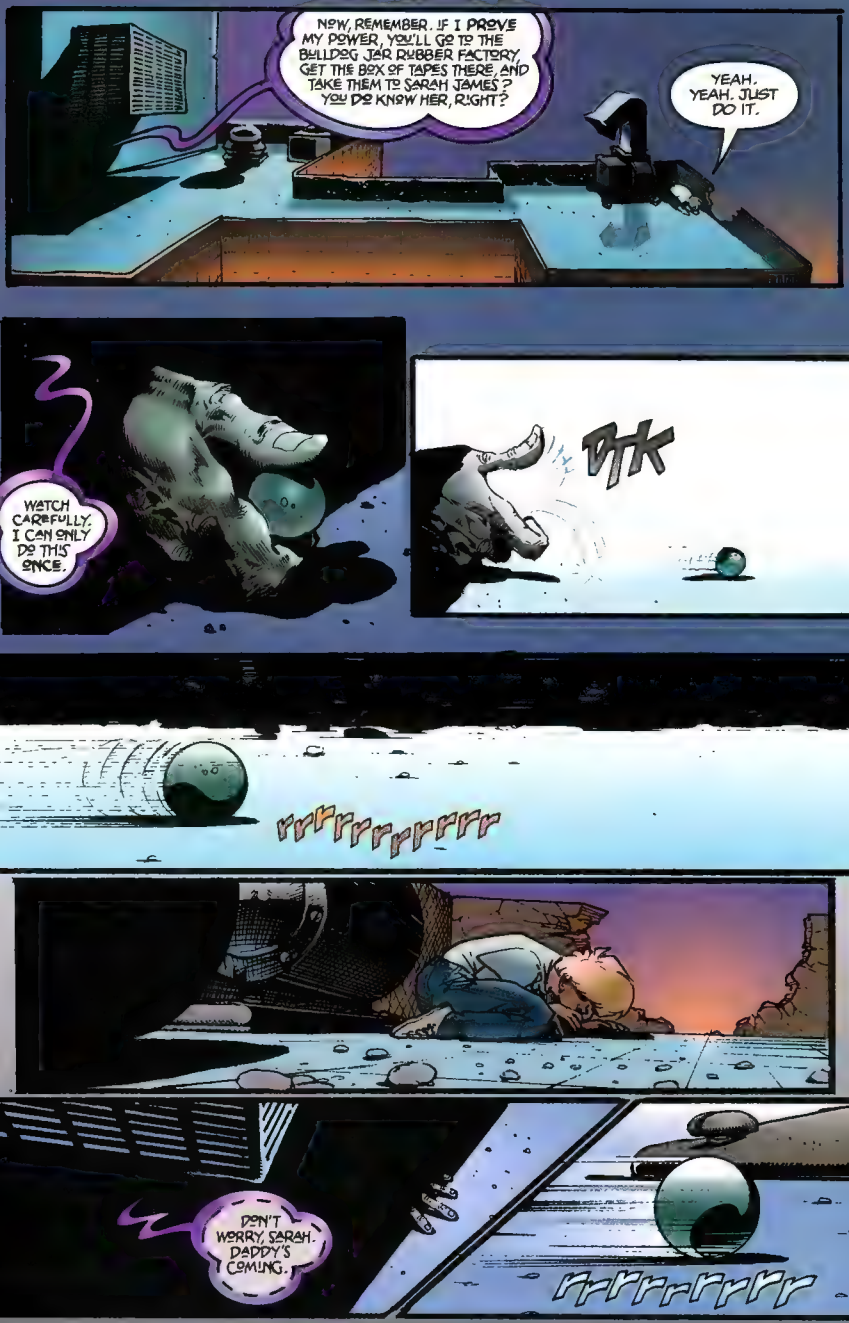

I DON'T THINK YOU *ARE* MR. GONE! WHY DON'T YOU GIVE ME SOMETHING I CAN *USE*, SOMETHING THAT'LL MAKE ME *POWERFUL* AND *FEARED* RIGHT *NOW*?
LOOK, KID, THE MOST RELIABLE FORM OF POWER I KNOW IS HAVING **POWERFUL FRIENDS**-- JUDGES, SENATORS, LIKE THAT. ONCE YOU'RE A PART OF A SOCIO-POLITICAL **ELITE**, YOU CAN DO **ANYTHING**! THERE'S NO **GREATER** POWER THAN SETTING THE **PRIME INTEREST RATE**!
YEAH, BUT I'M IN JUNIOR *HIGH*! BUILDING A POWER BASE LIKE THAT WILL TAKE AT LEAST TILL I'M *TWENTY*. I WANT POWER *NOW*!
THEN WE'RE TALKING **CRIME**! I RECOMMEND **WHITE COLLAR CRIME**!
IT'S SAFE, IT'S HIGHLY PROFITABLE, AND IF YOU STEAL BIG ENOUGH, LIKE **LOOTING** A SAVINGS AND LOAN, OR STARTING A **CREDIT CARD** COMPANY, FOLKS WON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE IT AS A **CRIME**!
BUT I DON'T KNOW *HOW* TO LOOT A SAVINGS AND LOAN!
THEN WE HAVE TO GO FOR **STREET CRIME**. BUY A **GUN**.


A GUN WILL GIVE YOU A LOT OF POWER OVER ANYBODY THAT DOESN'T HAVE A GUN. UNFORTUNATELY, YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST PERSON TO THINK OF THIS.
WITH HALF THE POPULATION PACKING, WE MAY HAVE TO ESCALATE. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BAZOOKAS?
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIMME WHAT YOU'RE WEARING?
IT'S OBVIOUSLY A MAGNETIC AURA BOOSTER, FOR PROJECTING YOUR THOUGHT WAVES ONTO PEOPLE AND GETTING CONTROL OF THEIR EMOTIONS.
SNIFF SNIFF
WHAT'S THAT FUNNY SMELL?
S'NOT. IGNORE THE AROMA. CREATURES OF GREAT MAJESTY AND POWER SOMETIMES SMELL.
CLINK!
THIS THING? IT'S A NECK BRACE. IT'S SUPPOSED TO KEEP MY HEAD IN LINE WITH MY SPINE.
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT'S WORKING.

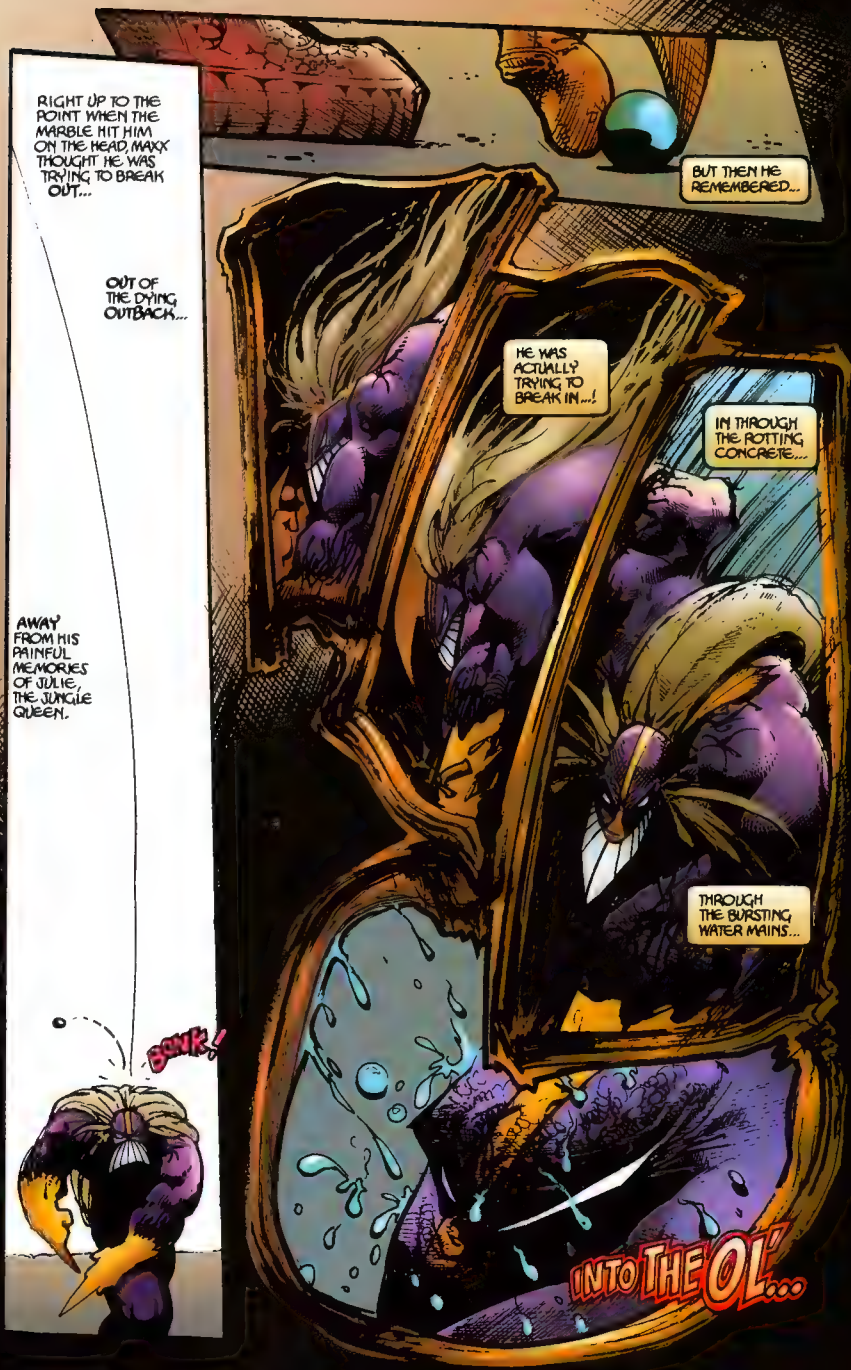

I DON'T THINK YOU CAN DO ANYTHING!
THERE'S NO NEED TO GET NASTY.
IT'S TRUE! MAXX IS SUPPOSED TO BE THIS BIG SUPERHERO, RIGHT? ONE DAY KENT AN' ME WERE TALKING TO THIS OLD BUM AND THIS JUNKIE JUMPED US.
DID MAXX SAVE US? NOOOOO. THE OLD BUM SAVED US. WHAT GOOD IS A HERO IF HE'S NOT GONNA BE AROUND EVERY TIME YOU NEED HELP?
YOU'RE JUST LIKE MAXX!
THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED, IF I'M GONNA KEEP KENT SAFE, I'M GONNA HAVE TO BE POWERFUL MYSELF...EVEN IF I HAVE TO BE A VILLAIN!

JILL
I met this guy in a donut shop just outside of Butte, Montana.
He said he was Jack... something. A freelance forensic pathologist.
We laughed about that... Jack and Jill, you know.
THE DONUT HOLE
"IT'S THE QUALITY"
HOTEL
ORDER HERE
I let him pick me up and take me to a cheesy motel.
The sex.
'Cause it WAS good.
The sex, I mean.
The sleaziness made it better somehow.
It was the kind of sex where your body seeps heat and your scalp sweats and you cry out the name of a STUFFED ANIMAL.
PIZZA

Afterwards, when we woke up, Jack seemed different somehow... less playful.
Worried.
Tense.
Of course, it WAS then he realized I took his car.
Yeah. That was probably it.


NOW, REMEMBER. IF I PROVE MY POWER, YOU'LL GO TO THE BULLDOG JAR RUBBER FACTORY, GET THE BOX OF TAPES THERE, AND TAKE THEM TO SARAH JAMES? YOU DO KNOW HER, RIGHT?
YEAH. YEAH. JUST DO IT.
WATCH CAREFULLY. I CAN ONLY DO THIS ONCE.
DIK
rrrrrrrrrrrr
DON'T WORRY, SARAH. DADDY'S COMING.
rrrrrrrrrr

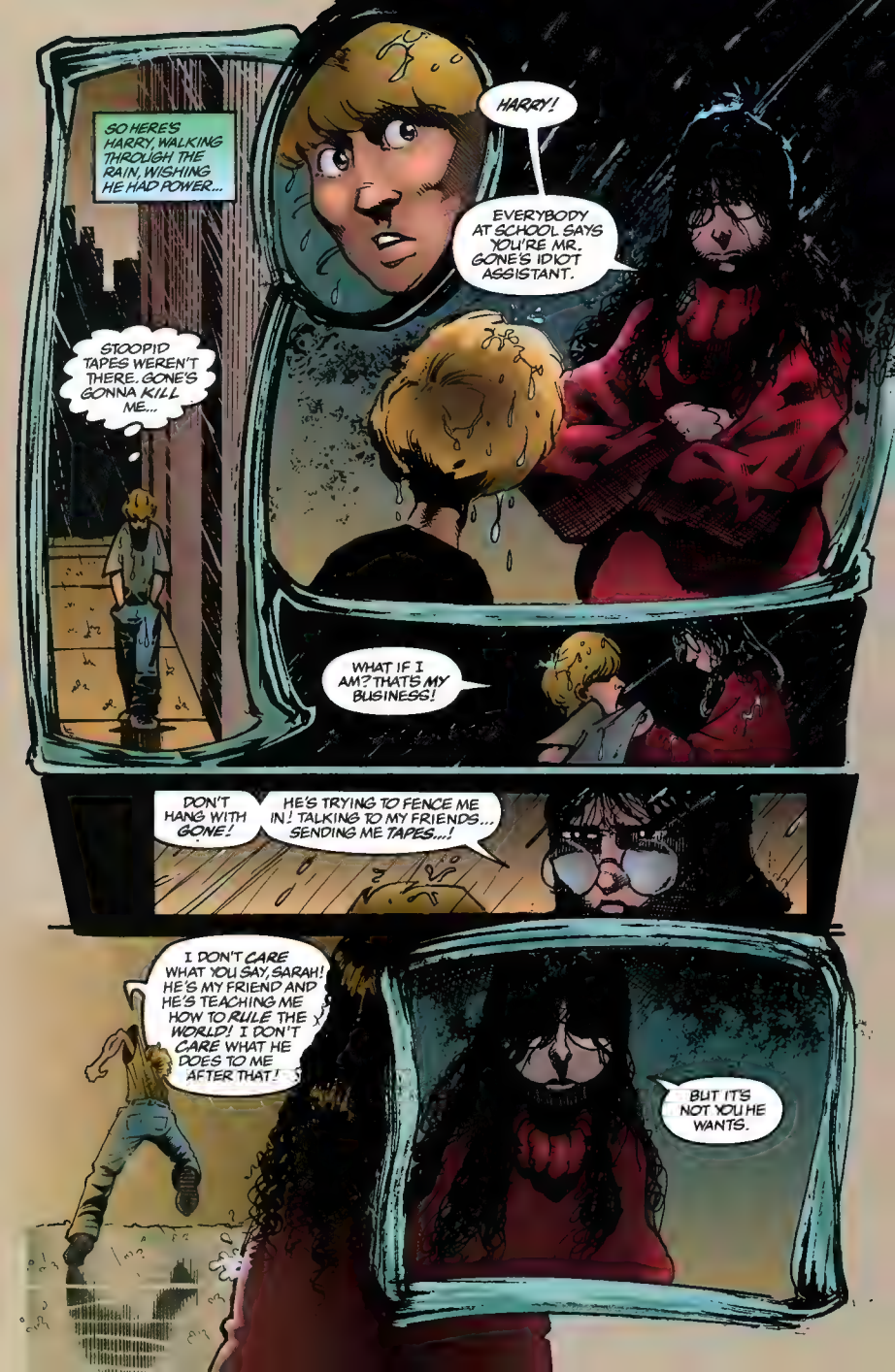
WOW!

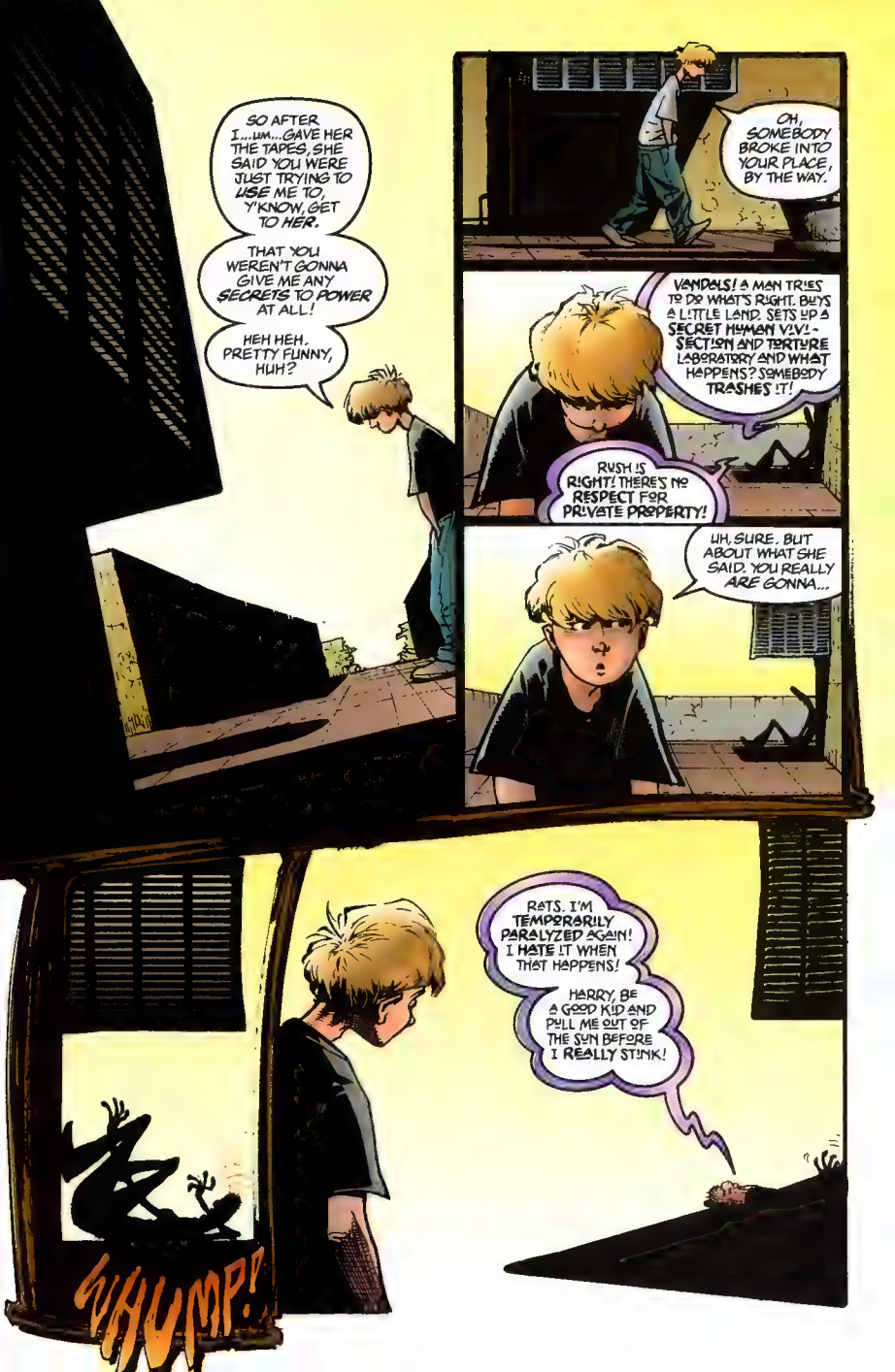

RIGHT UP TO THE POINT WHEN THE MARBLE HIT HIM ON THE HEAD, MAXX THOUGHT HE WAS TRYING TO BREAK OUT...
OUT OF THE DYING OUTBACK...
AWAY FROM HIS PAINFUL MEMORIES OF JULIE, THE JUNGLE QUEEN.
BONK!
BUT THEN HE REMEMBERED...
HE WAS ACTUALLY TRYING TO BREAK IN...!
IN THROUGH THE ROTTING CONCRETE...
THROUGH THE BURSTING WATER MAINS...
INTO THE OL'...

BULL-DOG-JAR-RUBBER-F
THIS SIDE UP
HEADQUARTERS (WITH ATTACHED APARTMENT AND WALK-IN KITCHEN) TO MR GONE, DEMON PRINCE OF EVIL!
GRRRCH!
MUH, TAPES...

CLIC
SO, YOU SEE, SARAH... I HAD TO GIVE THAT PURPLE MUD-PUPPY A REAL VILLAIN TO FIGHT OR HIS LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN MEANINGLESS. SO I CREATED THIS MR. GON—
FRZT
KAAACK

DO YOU THINK THESE WIRE-RIMS AND THE STRAIGHTER HAIR MAKE ME LOOK MORE LIKE JULIE, MAXX?
OR IS IT JUST TOTALLY A LOST CAUSE?
AND THERE'S NO POINT LURKING OUTSIDE, MAXX. IT'S NOT LIKE I DON'T KNOW YOU'RE THERE.
SNOOT.
THE STAND
HERE.
THEY'RE FROM YOUR FATHER. I DECIDED NOT TO BURN THEM ALL.
MY FATHER? MR. GONE?!
WAIT, MAXX. I DON'T WANT THESE. MAXX...!
AARGGHGH!
SOMEBODY'S GONNA SUFFER FOR THIS!


SO HERE'S HARRY, WALKING THROUGH THE RAIN, WISHING HE HAD POWER...
HARRY!
EVERYBODY AT SCHOOL SAYS YOU'RE MR. GONE'S IDIOT ASSISTANT.
STOOPID TAPES WEREN'T THERE. GONE'S GONNA KILL ME...
WHAT IF I AM? THAT'S MY BUSINESS!
DON'T HANG WITH GONE!
HE'S TRYING TO FENCE ME IN! TALKING TO MY FRIENDS... SENDING ME TAPES...!
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY, SARAH! HE'S MY FRIEND AND HE'S TEACHING ME HOW TO RULE THE WORLD! I DON'T CARE WHAT HE DOES TO ME AFTER THAT!
BUT IT'S NOT YOU HE WANTS.

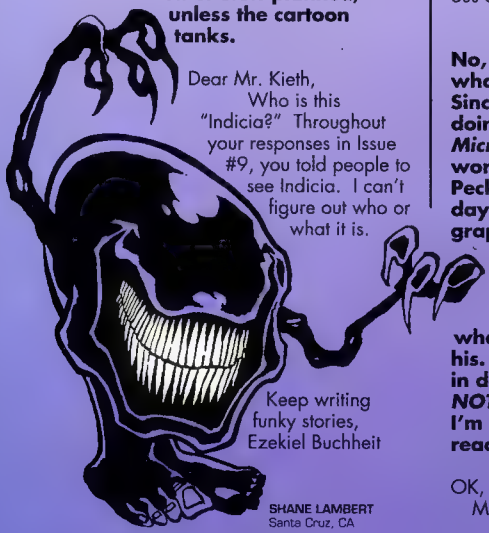

SO AFTER I...um...GAVE HER THE TAPES, SHE SAID YOU WERE JUST TRYING TO USE ME TO, Y'KNOW, GET TO HER.
THAT YOU WEREN'T GONNA GIVE ME ANY SECRETS TO POWER AT ALL!
HEH HEH. PRETTY FUNNY, HUH?
OH, SOMEBODY BROKE INTO YOUR PLACE, BY THE WAY.
VANDALS! A MAN TRIES TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT. BUYS A LITTLE LAND. SETS UP A SECRET HUMAN V.I.V.! - SECTION AND TORTURE LABORATORY AND WHAT HAPPENS? SOMEBODY TRASHES IT!
RUSH IS RIGHT! THERE'S NO RESPECT FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY!
UH, SURE. BUT ABOUT WHAT SHE SAID. YOU REALLY ARE GONNA...
RATS. I'M TEMPORARILY PARALYZED AGAIN! I HATE IT WHEN THAT HAPPENS!
HARRY, BE A GOOD KID AND PULL ME OUT OF THE SUN BEFORE I REALLY STINK!
WHUMP!

SURE, BUT...
YOU AREN'T JUST USING ME...
RIGHT?
OF COURSE I'M USING YOU! EVERYBODY USES EVERYBODY! WHAT PLANET DO YOU THINK YOU'RE ON?
I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIGGIN' POWER SECRETS! YOU FELL FOR THAT? I JUST KNOW WHERE A COUPLE OF THE DIMENSIONAL PORTALS ARE. I MAKE UP THE REST! ONLY AN IDIOT WOULD THINK I'VE GOT REAL SUPER-POWERS!
NOW GROW UP AND DRAG ME OUT OF THE DAMN SUN...!

MY ONE FLAW AS AN ARCH-FIEND WAS ALWAYS AN EXCESS OF CANDOR.
SPLAT
SNCH.
THE REALLY SAD THING IS THAT DIDN'T KILL ME. IT JUST REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY HURT.
HI, HARRY. SARAH SAID YOU MIGHT BE IN TROUBLE.
ANYTHING BAD HAPPENING UP HERE?
NO, MAXX. THERE'S NOTHING UP HERE AT ALL.

Good news: Maxx will have his *own half-hour* on MTV, as opposed to sharing it with another show. But you'll have to wait 'til February for it to start. When it comes out, let me know what you think. Everyone says it looks a *LOT* like the book.

Dear Sam,
My toast is getting cold, but I decided to write you this letter.
JULIE CAN'T LEAVE! Without Julie, MAXX is going to lose his grip on this reality and all hell is gonna break loose! Julie is his anchor in this world, and without her all is lost for our friend MAXX. Maybe it's just the opposite—maybe MAXX is Julie's foundation in the outback, and without him in her life, she's just meat for some wayward Dicant.
A loyal MAXX addict,
Tim Tobias
San Diego, CA
P.S. Are there plans for any MAXX figures a la Todd toys?
No toys as of yet, but stay tuned. Maybe a CD-ROM game, and lots of other stuff planned, unless the cartoon tanks.



Dear Mr. Kieth,
Who is this "Indicia?" Throughout your responses in Issue #9, you told people to see Indicia. I can't figure out who or what it is.
Keep writing funky stories,
Ezekiel Buchheit
SHANE LAMBERT
Santa Cruz, CA

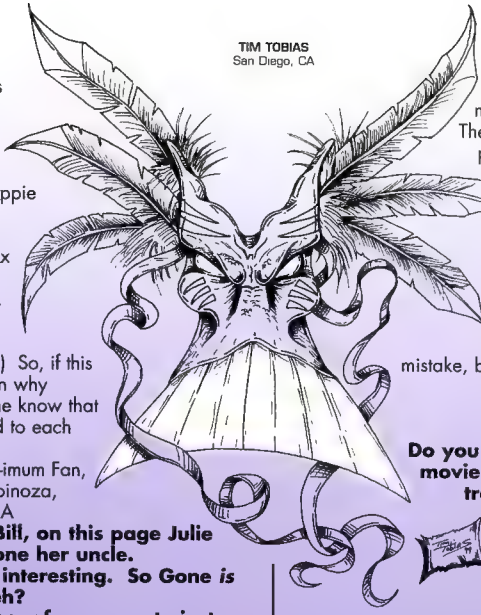
The indicia is the little bitty words in the bottom of the inside front cover of the comic, lots of legal crap that I stick comments in. Oh yeah, we found Nathan Schultz, who says:

Yo Sam! and that Bill guy,
Yes, this is Nathan Schultz and why do you want to know where I am?
Signing off,
Da Shoe (Nathan Schultz)
Fenton, MI

Dear Sam,
Whatever happened to the Jasper kid in #9? Is his hand still stuck in the outback?
Just wondering,
Jeff Tutt
Chesapeake, OH
The first page of this issue shows what happened to his hand. The last page is six seconds before that.

Dear Sam.,
Does Jim (James?) Sinclair work at Dark Horse, doing work on *The Shadow* and various other things?
Paul Silveria
Vancouver, WA
No, that is a different Jim Sinclair, who actually goes by "James." *Jim* Sinclair has worked with Kelly Jones doing, among other things, *Micronauts* for Marvel. He also worked with me on "The Killing Peck" in *Secret Origins* for DC. His day job is working on computer graphics, and he is married to Liza. Together they have Jamie, age 2, and a crazy cat named Pumpkin.
Jim is a cool guy, and a lot of what you think is my art is actually his. He pulls my butt out of the fire in deadline crunches, and I could *NOT* do the book without him (and I'm not just writing this because he's reading it).

OK, Sammy, I think I got it:
Maxx is Julie's father, Mr. Gone is Sarah's



TIM TOBIAS
San Diego, CA

father and Julie's uncle. So that means that Julie and Sarah are cousins. Then Sarah's wacked-out hippie mom may be Julie's mom's sister, so Maxx is Mr. Gone's brother-in-law. (What is this, *Great Expectations*?) So, if this is all true, then why doesn't anyone know that they're related to each other?

A Maxx-imum Fan,
John Espinoza,
Indio, CA

Sam: Ok, Bill, on this page Julie calls Mr. Gone her uncle.
Bill: That's interesting. So Gone *is* her uncle, eh?
Sam: No, no, of course not—just a friend of the family. It's a nickname.
Bill: But if you call him, "Uncle," everyone will think he *is*.
Sam: No, no, no—nobody would be *that* stupid!
Bill: No, *we'd* be stupid if we didn't make it clear that he's not her uncle.
Sam: It doesn't matter. It's extraneous information that doesn't advance our storyline.
Bill: What storyline?

Dear Sam,
I think I've figured out that Maxx is Julie's MOM.

Jacob Thompson
Rapid City, SD

Damn—So now what do we do for the big climax in #20?

Dear Sam,
My drawing was printed is Issue #10, and for that I am very grateful. However there is one problem I must *address*. Under my name it says "Cranford, NJ." I don't live in Cranford, NJ. I live in Abbotsford, B.C., CANADA. An entirely different country!

Blair Hart
Abbotsford, B.C.
Canada

Oh. . .Sorry. . .

Dear Sam,
My girlfriend, Addie, and I have noticed a mistake in The Maxx #10. On page two, the radio is playing a song from the *Clockwork Orange* soundtrack. The line, "And keep her by the sea" never appears in that song. We think you have made a mistake, but we still love you.

Sincerely,
Ben and Addie
Barre, MA

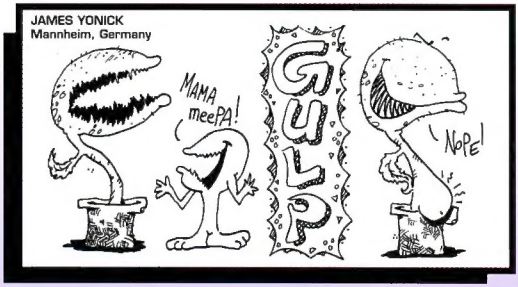
Do you mean in the movie or on the soundtrack album?

Because they're different. When we recorded the cartoon, I wanted the movie version, which is much *shorter* than the one on the record, but when we tried to obtain the music, the only version we could find was the one that's on the soundtrack album. This is not the original version I wanted, because it is too long and has the inferior verses. We couldn't lift what we wanted from the movie, because Malcolm MacDowell's dialogue starts partway through, but THAT'S the version we want! So if anyone can find this obscure original song by Erica Eagan ("I Wanna Marry a Lighthouse Keeper"), there's a swell prize in it for ya. (I realize this may start a whole lotta nonsense, but that's a good thing. . .)

Sam,
I read that yourself and Frank Frazetta will be releasing art work for Glenn Danzig's comic company. If so, when will this come out, and will it feature The Maxx?

Jonathan Allaire
Frostburg, MD

Glen and I were talking about doing a book which would be half me and half Simon Bisley doing Frazetta characters. But after sitting down and taking some stabs at the ol' Deathdealer, I have new awe for the

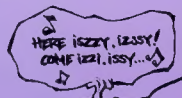


ability it takes to *really* draw. I feel like, if I can't do a Frazetta book right, what's the point? (Besides, Bisley's art kicks my butt, and who wants to go through *that* in public!)

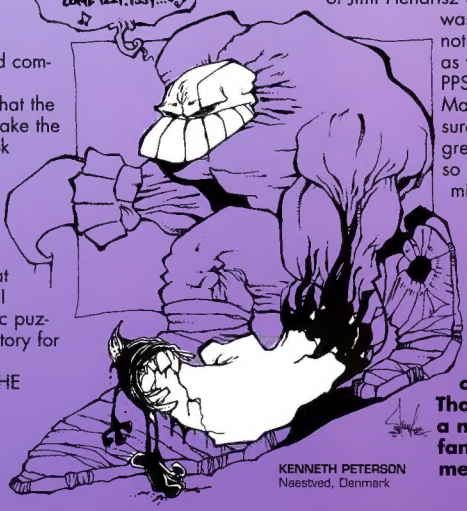
"Oh, Great one"—(Sam),
I read in Maxx One-Half that you've done some Sandman work. It just so happens that Sandman is another of my favorites. What issues did you do?
Buddy Hanson
Lee's Summit, MO

Issues 1-6—In fact, I co-created it with Neil. Well, actually Neil created it; I just came up with what he looked like (Sandman, not Neil). Neil and I patched up some old wounds recently and are talking about maybe collaborating on something in the future. How about it—is a Maxx-Sandman team-up too unlikely? Tell us what you think.

Dear Sam,
What's this? No one has the rights to toast? Hmmm. . .
Nick Main
Mauldin, SC



Dear Sam Kieth and company,
Besides the fact that the cords in question make the picture of Maxx look cool in the back of Issue #6, is there any hidden meaning there? I mean, are the cords some mysterious icons that will enlighten me if I solve their enigmatic puzzle? If it ruins the story for me, don't tell me.
LONG LIVE THE MAXX!!!!!!!!
Andrew Hunt
Xenia, OH


KENNETH PETERSON
Naestved, Denmark

When I did Wolverine covers for Marvel Comics Presents, the rips in his clothing kept growing, 'til everyone started calling them telephone cords. That's the whole story. Really.

Dear Mr. Sam,
By the time you get this, I may have seen you at the San Diego comic con **[Nope. Sorry]**, but if you get it before, I'll be the chubby blonde gofer clutching my brother's copy of Maxx #1 in my sweaty hands while my bosses yell at me to get back to work. My brother turned me on to your book because he said I WAS Julie. I've stayed because I found much better-than-average storylines and cool characters who wear real CLOTHES. Just one thing, though: Why is Julie a Camille Paglia fan? Camille Paglia is SATAN! She thinks soap operas are a fundamental expression of womanhood. She thinks women who get raped were asking for it, fer chrissake!
Adios, hombre de parajitos!
Kilroy the Exceptionally Short
4885 Mt. Elbrus Dr.
San Diego, CA 92117
PS to Kelsey McNair, who drew the picture of Jimi Hendrisz in Issue #9—Jimi was LEFTHANDED, not RIGHTHANDED, as you drew him!
PPS Should I start a Maxx zine? I'm not sure I'd do such a great job by myself, so I'm asking for submissions, art, deranged ideas and/or opinions.

Paglia who? A long time ago, I said that if anybody wanted to start a fan club, go for it. Those words were a mistake, since a fan club would mean we would

have to be involved, but we don't have time or skills for that, what with the book, cartoon, etc. But a zine, something *you* folks could do yourselves, is a great idea. Write to Kilroy, for example, if you're interested in that kind of thing. Although we don't know her, I'm sure she's really cool. (Are you a she?)

Dear Sam,

Do you get discouraged that, even though you make these cool statements about feminism and successfully create an awesome, well-rounded female comic character (by well-rounded I mean interesting and original personality—a rarity in comic heroines—AND having non-stereotypical pudgy physical attributes), your fans keep sending in drawings of Julie as a centerfold bimbo with silicon implants? 'Cause I do. Somebody should tell these geeks to learn how to draw real women instead of looking through their girlie magazines for models!

A big, fat Maxx-head, feminist, *and* cartoonist so I know what I'm talking about,

Johanna Faust
Warminster, PA

Actually, geeks like that grow up to be geeks like me who write stories where women are people too. It's not people who *start* there that I worry about—it's people who get *stuck* there.

Dear Mr. Kieth,

WHY SO LONG BETWEEN ISSUES!? I have this bizarre vision of an unbathed, unshaven Sam Kieth rising out of bed just long enough to make a few scribbles on his drawing board and then passing out again, exhausted from a day's work **[Pretty close!]**. Arrrghh.. the suspense between issues is killing me. I'm sure it takes a lot of hard work to put out an issue, but please, show us some mercy!!!!

Long Live MAXX,
Mike Arena
Maspeth, NY

I'll let the next letter defend me.

Dear Sam,

Why does everyone keep bitching about late issues and asking umpteen questions that answered themselves the issue after they wrote? Why can't everyone sit back and enjoy the ride?

Take your time and tell your story and keep in mind that all the doubting Thomas's are full of wee-wee. Some of us like a good mystery.

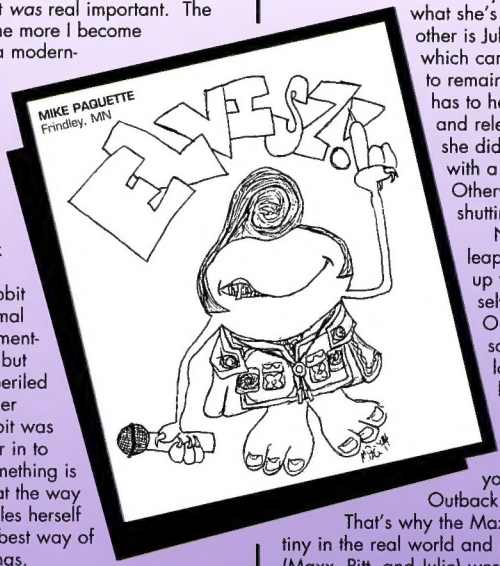
Scott Caudill
Blacksburg, VA

To One Mr. Samuel Kieth, Guru of Maxx, Channel of Dreams, Thinker of Way Out Stuff, Artista Magnifica, and Bearer of So Many Titles They Escape Me. . .Thanks for letting me lay it on thicker than fudge in summer **[He's kidding. . . I think]**,

Okay. Just sat down and read through Issues #1-11 of The Maxx in one sitting, and whether or not things are making sense to you, they are starting to make sense to me. I think. I'm about to engage you in a long exploration of what the hell it is The Maxx is about exactly, so stop me anytime if you get bored.

The Maxx himself is actually some guy named Dave who somehow found the seed-bringer (did I get that right?) mask that was the key to Julie Winter's spirit animal (seeds being the roots of Julie's intended new self reality?). Upon putting it on, he became consumed by her world, her Outback. As Mr. Gone said (Ish II): "You're not a rabbit. You just got in the way when Julie's spirit animal tried to incarnate on this plane." The Maxx misplaced his face—his identity. And something in him is very scared to face

exactly what it is he was, maybe because what he is now might just be better. Besides, he's afraid the world will end when Julie leaves (which I assume will be disproved in Issue 12). Why would he want to escape? All this comes mainly from Issue 5, and the story of the Crappon Inna Hat. You were right. That *was* real important. The more I read it, the more I become con-vinced it is a modern-day comic masterpiece.



Julie is tougher. We know more about her, but the pieces themselves are more complex. I think that her relationship with the rabbit as her spirit animal was not only cemented by its death, but also directly imperiled by it. She lost her guide. The rabbit was trying to clue her in to the fact that "something is wrong here," that the way her mother handles herself maybe isn't the best way of dealing with things.

The day the rabbit died, Julie inherited that switch, that ability to shut things off and do "what needed to be done." The ability to survive. Unfortunately, surviving doesn't allow you to do much else. Years later Julie becomes an architect, trying to provide structure for her life. She lives in a building her father designed, and I'm not quite sure what the connection is there. When she was attacked and raped, she overcame it by flicking the switch yet again, and this *may* have been the catalyst that fractured the Outback and set up the book. Of course, that's a big "may."

As for her social work, Julie herself has seen into the truth there: that, in an attempt to gain control, she surrounds herself with people she has control over. She's also come to some kind of understanding with what Mr. gone tried to reveal to her in Issue 2, before she beheaded him. She hit the switch again. I think she's making the wrong decision leaving Maxx behind; he is supposed to help her find her own truth, after all. Maybe this is the truth he's led her to, though, that she has to find out on her own. I'm not sure.

As for her fractured psyche, it seems to have two main parts. One is the corrupted Leopard Queen, Julie's **[possible]** future, who is very much afraid of what she's becoming. The other is Julie's younger self, which can no longer afford to remain the same. Julie has to help it grow up, and relearn everything she did in life, except with a different ending. Otherwise she'll keep shutting everything off.

Now comes a big leap. When Julie met up with her other selves in her Outback, she screwed with a loosely established balance. As the balance shifts and she re-educates her younger self, the Outback grows smaller.

That's why the Maxx and Pitt were tiny in the real world and the three of them (Maxx, Pitt, and Julie) were huge in the world of the Outback. Why exactly a switch occurred, with their Outback personalities being cut loose in the real world and vice versa, I'm not sure. Maybe something to do with the balance again. I have no idea how Pitt got dragged into it, except that Mr. Gone duped him into searching for Tommy in the real world, a Tommy which was really an is.

Now for big jump number two. Hang on. I think everyone we have seen so far, just about, is a piece of Julie's psyche, which has become fractured beyond belief, which is understandable after all the damage she has suffered without a spirit animal to guide her through her dark hours. Maxx embodies the idealistic, heroic elements of her persona. We heard a little of it when Gone captured her in Ish 2. After all her Paglia-speak, she cut loose on Gone, saying that he was the sicko with the problem with women who had kidnapped her, and she had nothing to do with it. Not quite Paglia to my ears. Anyway, the Leopard Queen is the strong sexual element of her psyche,

which can't help but become darker and darker **[if she continues on her current path]**. Kid Julie is obviously her childlike persona. Mr. Gone is the most dangerous element. He is her truth. He holds her answers, and she'll have to face him down to really begin to rebuild her life. And as her truth, he reflects the dark parts of her soul, which lends him his power and his mission.

We know how The Maxx got pulled into Julie's fractured fantasy, but Mr. Gone remains very much a mystery. How Sarah, Glorie, and those elements of the cast fit in is also unclear. Obviously Julie had contact with Mr. Gone in her youth, but I'm not sure if he was Mr. Gone, second-rate, gun-toting, pan-dimensional sorcerer at that point. But listening to his conversation with her father, there was obviously something going on. Is he really her uncle? I'm not quite sure. He's obvoiusly Sarah's father, but how that fits into his existence in relation to Julie's family is currently eluding my grasp. How exactly does the doll tie in? Again, I'm weak on that point. I can't figure everything out, dammit.

Hell, what about Julie's dad; what's his deal? I hope just because she's split we won't stop seeing her in the book. While I'm sorting around for loose cannons, what the hell is the deal with the Buick? Tommy had one and I've picked one up tooling around in the book here and there. And where do Sarah and her horses fit into this?

Whether intentional or not, you've built one helluva puzzle. And whether the sales reflect it or not, you've currently created one of the best "superhero" books ever done.

Nicholas Jahr
Great Barrington, MA

This guy's so close he's on fire, with only a couple of minor comments I added. Nothing made sense to me before, but now it's all coming together. Thanks for a deep read of this stuff!

***Any* story can be interpreted a bunch of different ways, so don't get totally hung up on one. Even Bill and I disagree about what some stuff means. All that matters is that it means something to someone. Hell, maybe *that* doesn't matter—OK, never mind. Nothing matters. . .**

MILES PENCKE
Saranac, NY

Dear Sam,
Is "Qusak" the actual sound of a bunny leg getting run over by a Buick?

Your Properly Brainwashed Fan
Johnny T. Rutledge
Dallas, TX

Yup.

Dear Mr. Kieth,
Who or what eats the "Kat Food" in Julie's refrigerator?

Peace, Love, Comics,
"Crash"
Aurora, CO

Julie. She had a cat, but she ran over it [Qusak!] and can't bear to throw out its food.

ADAM DAVIS
Gilroy, CA